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NUMBER

JUNE MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 8th inst., at eight o'clock, in the Assembly Hall of the Public Library, corner McAllister and Larkin Streets. Take elevator to third floor. Car lines No. 5 or No. 19.

The feature of the evening will be an address by Mr. Alvin Seale, Superintendent of the new Steinhart Aquarium, now under construction adjacent to the present building of the California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park. Mr. Seale has spent some eighteen years in ornithological pursuits and will tell us of his experiences while "Collecting Birds in the South Sea Islands," illustrating his lecture with lantern slides. Visitors are welcome.



JUNE FIELD TRIP will be taken on Sunday, June 11th to Tennessee Cove and the high bluffs overlooking the ocean, for a half-mile northerly therefrom. The list on this walk usually includes forty species and generally records something out of the ordinary.

Take 8:15 a. m. Sausalito Ferry and purchase round trip tickets to Manzanita, 48c. Bring lunch and canteens as there is no water near lunching place.



PROCEEDINGS OF THE MAY MEETING: The sixty-fourth regular meeting of the Association was held on May 11th, in the Assembly Hall of the San Francisco Public Library, with President Kibbe in the chair; Miss Ames, Recording Secretary; fourteen members present.

Prior to the session, the Board of Directors assembled and elected Miss Matilda V. Nienburg, of Alameda, to membership.

The entire time of the meeting was given over to a review of the fascinating notes of Dr. Casey Albert Wood, F. L. Z. S., Assoc. Mem. A. O. U., who has devoted his professional career to Ophthalmology, and in the course thereof has made an intensive study of the anatomy and physiology of the eyes of birds, as a step in the study of human eyesight. It is with regret that we are able to append only certain excerpts from these notes, dealing specifically with bird observations en route from Halifax via Barbados to Georgetown, British Guiana, and in the course of a trip of some two hundred miles inland from Georgetown to the Great South American Falls, described by Eleanor Beers Lestrade in Scribner's Magazine, 1920, page 562. Here the Potaro river (a branch of the Essequibo river, which in turn empties into the Demerara), plunges over 800 feet into the Kaietur Gorge, in a sheet 400 feet wide.



Random Bird Observations by Dr. Casey A. Wood

On our way from Halifax to Bermuda, and when some four hundred miles from the nearest land, a loggerhead shrike flew on board. Accompanying us from the Nova Scotian coast were two acceptable forms of butcher bird food,—a couple of English sparrows and several crates of cabbages, (with their usual families of cabbage-worms), securely roped to uprights on

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the forward deck. The shrike, (what a beautifully set-up and fearless brigand was he!), dined first off the sparrows and then, after a day or two, gave his attention to the cabbages. He must have improved the vegetables greatly and I could not resist the temptation to advise the consignee at Port Hamilton that he should advertise arrival of a special lot of "bird-picked" vegetables.

The shrike remained with us for several days. It seemed to some of us that he stayed until the cabbage grubs were exhausted and then, despising the dangers—if there were any for him—of the waste of waters, flew away. Dr. Chas. Richmond, of Washington, a widely known authority on the subject, believes that birds have no conception of a moving ship, as such, but regard it as a part of the land, and he writes me that probably this *Lanius* acted just as any accidental visitor would on any isolated rock in the Atlantic, and was not bothered to ask why the food supply was sufficient when on other islets he had found it exceedingly scarce.

Another bird especially attracted by ships, is known to sailors as the Boatswain Bird. We were fortunate in having one with us on this trip—appropriately introduced to me by the functionary whose name he bore. The Tropic Bird, to give him his correct designation, has the two middle feathers of his tail so arranged, and projecting, that they are said to resemble a marlinspike, and so to suggest the officer just mentioned. The very beautiful individual that came aboard the steamer was *Phaethon* (because his whole life is spent in following the chariot of the sun) *Americanus*. He had webbed feet, some black markings on the face and wings, but his general coloring was a lovely satiny white. After he had been duly admired and allowed to rest awhile, he returned to his favorite task of attending the horses of the sun-god.

In the harbor at Grenada we saw, quite close at hand, numerous Frigate or Man-of-War birds, *Fregata Aquila*. These birds are found near the equator all over the globe, and both sexes have the same coloration above,—a chocolate brown with a metallic sheen that appears shiny black to the distant observer. The female has white beneath and her outstretched legs are plainly pink, while her mate's are black. The body is relatively small while the wings, as large and widespread as a swan's, give the animal great buoyancy.

Later, when we reached the South American mainland, we made the acquaintance of another bird fit to be mentioned with these majestic aves, viz, the swallow-tailed kite, *Elanoides forficatus*. This feathered beauty, noted because of its length of tail and wing, has a black body but a white head and neck; the outstretched wings show from below a broad white band extending almost from one wing-tip, across the body to a corresponding point on the opposite side. These markings, with the long bifurcated tail, make a splendid appearance as the bird goes sailing and soaring through the blue.

Do caged birds on shipboard suffer from seasickness? Well, some of them do. One rather stormy day, when between Bermuda and Sombrero Light, our good ship rolled and tossed a good deal and some of the passengers retired,—for a reason. Our parrot was noticed to be frankly and freely indulging in an attack of *mal de mer*. It was no mere ordinary fit of gagging, but the genuine article, followed by that unmistakable glazed look about the eyes, that indifference to his favorite food and that wobbly, groggy state, from which he did not recover until we had reached more quiet waters. My observation of them leads me to believe that, except when at play, parrots strongly object to swaying branches and irregularly swinging cages; in their sober moments they seek the stiff limbs of steady trees and, as all naturalists know, they nest and often sleep, like woodpeckers, in holes scooped out of arboreal trunks. Perhaps that is one explanation of the high mortality among captive birds imported from Africa and America in small cages and across stormy seas.

Speaking of parrots, a good many West Indian islands have had, and some of them still have, varieties of these beautiful and highly intelligent birds that are, in certain instances, peculiar to the Antilles. Austin H. Clarke

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tells us that the parakeet, once abundant in the hills of Barbados, has suffered the same fate as most of the other West Indian parrots parakeets and macaws. Not only are they unknown to any living native but even tradition hardly records their early existence. Worst of all, the memory of barely a single species, a Cuban variety, *Ara tricolor*, is preserved as a museum specimen. It seems outrageous that these lovely and sensitive animals should be treated by both natives and (some) whites as game birds, and that the edible quality of the parrot should be partly responsible for his extermination. Clarke also points out that their conversational powers and their reputation as pets led to wholesale traffic in immature birds, and their nesting places were so constantly watched that scarcely any of the young were allowed to go free. Then again, parrots are particular about their food and betray their presence by the litter of torn fruit on the ground about trees in which they habitually feed. Once such a tree is discovered all the (pot) hunter has to do is to sit nearby and shoot the birds as they fly in.

Another fatal and pathetic quality that leads to the easy destruction of these species by their human enemies is the parrot's devotion to his mate and to the flock of which the pair form an essential unit. When a parrot is killed or wounded the others, hitherto wild, wary and unapproachable, at once lose all fear of the hunter in their solicitude for their unfortunate companion and remain in the vicinity until all or most of them are killed.

As recent agitation of the matter has resulted in the enactment of protective laws by the various insular legislatures, many of the disappearing parrots may be saved, but some of them are already so reduced in numbers that it is doubtful whether they will survive.

Although the indigenous birds of Barbadoes are, like those of Bermuda, another isolated, non-continental island, comparatively numerous, yet they are divided among very few species, of which there are only about seventeen in the former colony. Nevertheless some Barbadian races, like that curious animal, the sea puffin, *Puffinus aubudoni*, are quite rare and seem slated for extinction.

One of the interesting birds of Barbados, the sparrow, *Pyrhulagra barbadosensis*, with his dove-colored breast and darker gray mantle, is a friendly and fearless, some say impudent, bird whose chief characteristic is that he invites himself at mealtime, daily and regularly, to such houses as do not support a cat or other objectionable deterrents. Flying through the ever-open window, entirely unmindful of the human beings within, he and his mate perch on the backs of chairs or other articles of furniture and look about for something to eat. The pair that attached themselves to our menage were inordinately fond of sugar and at tea-time took possession of the sugar bowl by roosting on the rim of the same as soon as the maid appeared with the tray. One of the birds then bobbed his head into the sugar,—not a very sanitary performance, you will say,—and with a dozen or so grains adhering to his beak, flew to a nearby table upon which he dislodged the sweet particles by knocking his mandibles upon the wood. Then the birds picked up the particles one by one, repeating the process until they were satisfied. A lady, with whom I was discussing this matter, told me that she had devised what she thought was a sure cure for the nuisance by placing doilies, weighted along their edges, over such receptacles as milk jugs, bread plates and sugar containers, but this was of little avail because the sparrows soon learned to pull off the protecting cloths, so that she was obliged to follow the example of the hotels and restaurants and support a feline or two. Cats appear to be the only animals, if we except the (imported) mongooses, that the Barbados sparrow really fears.

After ample observation of these odd little birds, I am of the opinion that not food alone impels them to make domiciliary visits. Often, following a full meal, and when there were crumbs lying about uneaten, have I seen a sparrow giving the contents of my room the "once over" in the minutest detail, poking into wardrobes, looking into shoes, hopping about on tables and under chairs and beds,—even searching the waste basket,—to satisfy curiosity which, I am convinced, is as real and pronounced in some birds as it is said to be in some-men.

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Most of us have observed that few are the birds whose notes or calls are similarly interpreted by even a majority of careful and competent observers. The fact reminds me of the differences of opinion expressed on viewing the newly-painted portrait of a friend; each of us sees it differently. So with bird notes, each of us hears them differently. We had a concrete example of this truth as we five sat in our boat on the upper Potaro, listening to, and carefully watching the vocal performances of numerous Bell Birds, *Vauvau alba*. They are snow white beauties, about the size of a blue-jay, and have curious long, black, erectile, pipe-stem-like wattles, partly covered with white feathers, attached to the centre of the forehead. After listening for an hour or so to the bird's double note, or "tolling" call, each of us was asked to say what well-known sound it resembles. None of us thought it recalled Waterton's "distant convent bell"; one said, "it is exactly like the sound caused by a single stroke on a triangle"; another, "one stroke of a blacksmith's hammer on his anvil"; still another, "a single blast upon a policeman's whistle, heard a hundred yards away"; another, "one blow on a medium-range tube of a xylophone"; and fifthly, "a stroke on a loud dinner gong."



MAY FIELD TRIP was taken on Sunday, the 14th, to Lafayette. As noted by Mr. Thomas in the *MAY GULL*, there is here experienced a sense of intimacy between the many nesting birds and their human friends, which is lacking from any other of our regularly explored habitats. The main highway traverses the little village, parallel to a beautiful stream, and as soon as one is fairly in Lafayette, he is right among the birds, and a little care will disclose nesting groups of towhees, wrens, chipping sparrows, warblers, chats, grosbeaks, woodpeckers, nuthatches' perhaps, vireos, phoebes, hummers, orioles, flycatchers and others.

The first contingent made the trip on train as per schedule; others came by motor-car. The final party consisted of sixteen members: Mesdemoiselles Ames, Baily, Flynn, Fritts, Griffin, King, Schroder, Sterne and Vandervoort; Mr. and Mrs. Carl R. Smith; Messrs. Kibbe, More, Rapp, Webb and Wright. Ten guests accompanied us: Mesdames W. H. Oliver and G. T. Roe; Mr. and Mrs. Merriweather; Mesdemoiselles Ruth Conrad, Amanda Jacobs, Betty Merriweather, Helen Parkinson, Muriel Pettit and Alyce Roberts. Twenty-six in all.

The day was delightful, albeit a little warm for strenuous birding, and the territory was not canvassed as thoroughly as usual, but the bird list, as noted by the recorder of the day, Mr. J. J. Webb, comprised forty-three species: On the bay, Western, California and Bonaparte gulls; cormorant, sandpiper and Hudsonian curlew. In Lafayette: California quail, mourning dove, turkey vulture, crow, California and Harris woodpeckers; red-shafted flicker, Allen hummer, black phoebe, western wood pewee and western flycatcher; California jay, meadowlark, Bullock oriole, Brewer blackbird, purple finch and linnnet; green-backed goldfinch, song sparrow, San Francisco and California towhees; black-headed grosbeak, Lazuli bunting, cedar waxwing, warbling vireo, lutescent and yellow warblers; long-tailed chat, pileolated warbler, Vigors and house wrens; red-breasted nuthatch, plain titmouse, bush-tit, and russet-backed thrush; robin and western bluebird.

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

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